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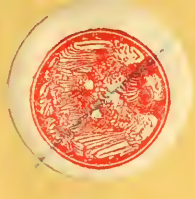

WHEN THE LAND WAS YOUNG.

An Incident of the Revolution.

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WHEN THE LAND WAS YOUNG.

AN INCIDENT OF THE REVOLUTION.
IN ONE ACT.

BY
LUCIE TOUSEY BURKHAM

Written for and presented before the Cincinnati Chapter D. A. R. Flag Day, 1908.

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CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY.

MADAME ELIZABETH WADSWORTH, whose husband is fighting for his country.

BETTY WADSWORTH, her daughter.

ANSTICE CARR, sister to Madame Wadsworth.

MISTRESS BENDALL, of "Wildwood", a staunch Tory.

MARY PASTON, a distant relative and dependent of Mistress Bendall.

MISTRESS LOIS LISLE
MISTRESS POLLY LISLE
MISTRESS ANNE LISLE
} Ladies of the neighborhood.

CAPTAIN RICHARD EVERETT, of General Washington's army.

THE PEDDLER.

POMPEY, page to the Misses Lisle.

SCENE: The Grounds of Colonel Wadsworth's estate, "The Meadows," in Virginia. The Summer of 1777.

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The scene presented is the grounds of "The Meadows," near the manor house. An entrance on the right leads to the house, on the left, to the garden. Slightly to the right of the center of the background is a garden bench on which lie battledores and a shuttlecock. To the right of the bench are two chairs and a table, in the immediate foreground. To the left of the bench are four chairs, a spinning-wheel and towards the center, a small table on which are a primer and other books, and a sampler in a working frame. Enter from left Anstice Carr and Betty Wadsworth. The child has a basket of flowers on her arm and is looking eagerly into Anstice's face.

ANSTICE.—And then the Good Fairies drove all the wicked Red Fairies with their horrid little tomahawks, into a great fearsome wood. There they shut them up with a big black beadle like old Uncle Cyrus to watch over them. Whenever they tried to escape, he would cry out to them; "Go 'long, ole Massa Red Mens, yo' all caint never come out no mo'.

BETTY [*clapping her hands*].—Oh, I'm glad they shut them up! But what became of the Princess, Auntie?

ANSTICE [*sitting down to right of bench and drawing the child to her*].—Oh, the Prince and the Princess went to dwell in a fair garden, where the Princess spun all day long on a wheel made of sweet sandal wood. When she was aweary of that, she wove coverlets of rose petals embroidered with dew-pearls. On every side of the garden stood an army of tall white lilies as spotless as her pure soul, and two kept guard at the gate, with blazing sun beams for swords. And the brave Prince loved her forever. There, does the ending suit my sweeting?

BETTY.—And the Princess was just like you, wasn't she Auntie, and the Prince like Cousin Dick?

ANSTICE [*impatiently*].—Nonsense! 'Tis foolish to speak so, child, fairies be nought like human folk [*rising*]. Come, I will play you at shuttles; there they lie on yonder bench. [*Betty brings shuttles placing her basket on the bench. They play; the shuttlecock falls.*] Pick it up. Poor thing, it is like the dove of peace that flutters over

our unhappy land but finds no place for her rest. It falls again? Faith, 'tis but a fledgling. Send it on strong pinions, as though it were leaving all else behind and flying on to happiness and love. [*She sends it up with a vigorous stroke and watches the flight musingly. It falls.*] Ah yes, a feathered cork *may* fall but a winged heart shall not stay in its quest! [*Enter Madame Wadsworth from left. Betty runs to meet her.*]

MADAME W.—So I find you here my mischiefs? Zebedee told me he saw you in the garden not an hour agone, playing at hide and seek and I sought you there behind each hedge.

BETTY.—Aye, and so we were, Mother, playing.

MADAME W.—Put by your playing, now, little daughter and get your primer, so that when this weary war is over and your father comes back to us again, you can read to him of the good little maid who sews neatly in the picture. [*Betty goes to small table and looks over books.*]

ANSTICE.—Have you heard from Miles again?

MADAME W.—No, not since two weeks, but in his last letter he said he hoped Betty was diligent about her cross stich and numbers. [*The ladies seat themselves upon bench.*] Anstice, dear, there be few men like my Miles, so strong, so brave and yet so tender toward all weaker things. Surely, I am blessed above most women. Some day, your knight will come riding by, and I pray God, sweetheart, he will make you as happy as I have been!

ANSTICE [*hesitating*].—Elizabeth, I think *he has* come!

MADAME W., [*leaning forward earnestly and taking her hand.*] Oh, my dear! Tell me of it, I beg!

ANSTICE.—It is all so strange. I know not if it be love. You have been as a mother to me since our own dear mother died, and I have grown up here in these green meadows, like the birds, singing my little song of life like them; like them, clothed and fed and joyous.

Of late there has come into my heart, something that is more than joy, deeper than happiness. This is the most beautiful summer I have ever known, and I say to myself, "It is because *he* is in the world, too!" Is that love, Elizabeth? [*Betty has returned with her book, and after futile efforts to attract her mother's attention, pulling her dress.*]

BETTY.—Shall I say my primer, mother?

MADAME W.—Yes, yes, dear! Anstice, when I have heard this little baggage, my head and heart and all of me shall be yours. Now, Mistress, what does this genteel young woman, seated with her housewife? [*Anstice walks over to the garden entrance and stands looking dreamily out. Her sister's eyes follow her from time to time. Betty leans against her mother's knee and reads slowly.*]

BETTY.— This pretty seamstress, who can see
And not admire her industry;
As thus upright she sits to sew,
Not stooping as some children do.

I can sew too, Mother. Mistress Paston says, that while the gentlemen are fighting, we ladies must knit and weave for the poor soldiers.

MADAME W.—So must we, little patriot. First finish your sampler, and in due time shall your stockings of warm wool cover the feet of some soldier who fights now, perchance, for you and me. [*Betty brings sampler from table.*] Ah, the work is well done. [*Holds it up to Anstice who leans over back of bench.*] Now stitch the motto. Canst read the pattern?

BETTY. This is my sampler,
Here you see
What care my mother
Took of me.
Betty Wadsworth, aged seven.

MADAME W.—Very good. Now take the stool, so; find your needle in your étui*. [*Arranges Betty who sews on sampler.*] There! [*Goes to Anstice they sit upon bench.*] Anstice, I do rejoice in this news. Richard has always been as a brother to me and the blindest can see that he has loved you long.

ANSTICE [*faintly*].—It is not Richard, you do not understand.

MADAME W.—Not Richard? Surely you must be jesting. It must be he. Who else could it be? Never have I seen you smile on any other man, and indeed, since these troublesome days have fallen upon us, there have been few visitors to steal your heart, scarce a spurred foot inside the gates of "The Meadows," and only the fortnightly visits of old Peter the peddler, to vary the dullness. [*A pause; then as a sudden thought comes to her*] Anstice, when you

* A small bag worn at the side.

came home from "Wildwood," you spoke oft of a young officer you met there, a Captain West. Can it be he?

ANSTICE [*speaking quickly*].—Yes. Oh, Elizabeth, if you knew him, you would be glad. Never saw I such a man—no—not Dick, or our own dear Miles.

MADAME W.—Little traitor!

ANSTICE.—And how he loves his country! One night as we walked beneath the moon in the garden, he asked me what I should demand in a lover. When I said, "First, that he should love his Country," he said, "Mistress Carr, you see before you a man who loves his Country more than Life or Love itself." Was not that wonderful? Could Miles have spoken better?

MADAME W. [*troubled*]. — 'Twas indeed well spoken—but whence came he, child? If a soldier, why does he linger at "Wildwood," where as every one knows, the sympathy with the Colonies is but half-hearted? A soldier's place is with his regiment.

ANSTICE.—Mistress Bendall was a friend of his mother, long ago, in London. He was on sick leave, recovering from a grievous wound.

MADAME W.—Is he still at "Wildwood?"

ANSTICE.—Not now. He is with the army. The war must be over soon, and when peace comes, he will come too, and see you and Miles—and me! Don't look so troubled, you will love him dearly, I am sure!

MADAME W.—'Twas a thought that came to me just then that troubled me. Anstice, there is a question I wish to ask you, though the answer I know before I ask.

ANSTICE.—What is it?

MADAME W.—You have never, for any reason, tried to open the gilded cabinet in my dressing room?

ANSTICE.—Never! Why do you ask?

MADAME W.—It is foolish of me to fancy it tampered with, but it is so constantly on my mind, that I have become weakly nervous over it.

ANSTICE.—Is it the cabinet where you keep your jewels? What is in it?

MADAME W.—You asked me, a moment ago, when I last heard from Miles. The latest despatch came to me secretly, from the hand of Tiberius who has been Miles' body servant, as you know,

since they both could walk. Two weeks ago, when all the house was abed, I heard a knocking at my chamber window, so gentle that it seemed at first but the tapping of the boughs in the evening breeze. I drew aside the curtain, and saw Tiberius, bespattered with mud and in a state which bespoke hard riding.

ANSTICE.—That must have been the night I was wakened by the sound of a horse's neighing. I remember thinking it was Mustapha's whinny coming up the oak lane. Then I fell asleep.

MADAME W.—It *was* Mustapha. Miles had sent me a secret despatch enclosing a sealed packet. The packet I was to guard as I would his honor.

ANSTICE.—Spoke he of the contents?

MADAME W.—It contained important surveys of the fortifications along our Virginia coast. The British, knowing that Miles' little company carried them, were trying to entrap his men and it was necessary to place them in safety. It is to be delivered only on his signed and sealed order.

ANSTICE.—Know you aught else? [*Enter, unobserved, Mary Paston, right.*]

MADAME W.—Nought, save that the woman whom her husband trusts so fully shall never be found wanting. [*Sees Mary P.; starts nervously.*] Ah, Mary, child, do you wish aught of me?

MARY [*curtsying*].—The message was for Betty, Madame.

MADAME W.—Pray, Mistress Betty, what mighty matters be these, that a special envoy is sent you? [*Betty lays down her sampler and runs to her mother.*]

MARY.—She bade me tell her when the caraways were done, and I saw Manda but now take them from the oven, quite brown and of a most delectable fragrance.

BETTY.—Oh, mother, may I go?

MADAME W.—Go, little sweet-tooth! [*Exeunt Mary and Betty, after curtsying.*]

ANSTICE [*looking after them*].—Elizabeth, I detest that girl!

MADAME W.—For shame to speak so of one who is alone and friendless.

ANSTICE.—I can not help it, I distrust her. Why is she here?

MADAME W.—You know that for years she has lived at "Wildwood," dependent on the not too generous bounty of Mistress Bendal, whose distant relative she is. Ten days ago, she came to me

and begged me to let her abide here, as life at "Wildwood" had become unbearable.

ANSTICE.—And of course you let her come! After Mistress Bendall's overbearing ways, your gentle sway must be Paradise. Nevertheless, I like her not, and if aught goes amiss here, if cabinets be tampered with, 'tis Mary Paston will be to blame. 'Tis a deceitful minx! [*Goes to spinning-wheel. Madame W. has risen and now approaches the larger table, Betty's work in her hand. She places work on table and faces Anstice.*]

MADAME W.—Anstice, you are more than cruel. Your wild ways I know, are but the flights of a butterfly, intent on the sweets of young things, but this—this unworthy suspicion—is not befitting a gentlewoman.

ANSTICE [*stubbornly*].—You will see. [*Spins rapidly.*]

[*Mistress Bendall, in gorgeous attire, has been haughtily approaching over the lawn, unseen by the ladies.*]

MISTRESS B.—Hoity toity, is this the way "The Meadows" receives its guests? Here I ride over in my new gilded chariot and find the gates shut in my face. One of my own footmen was compelled to descend and open for me. [*The ladies rise and curtsy. Mistress B. ignores them.*]

ANSTICE [*a trifle sarcastically*].—Was he much injured by the exertion, Mistress Bendall?

MISTRESS B.—Hold your tongue, Miss! Elizabeth, the way you manage your household is a disgrace to any Englishwoman.

MADAME W. [*with dignity*].—I am not an English woman, Mistress Bendall, nor do we seek either to imitate her ways or follow her guidance. As for Anstice, I pray you pardon her rudeness, which is but that of an unripe maid.

MISTRESS B.—Strangely *untutored*, I should say!

MADAME W.—You spoke but now of a new chariot; can it be that at this time, when the Country is suffering, and our soldiers are lacking both food and raiment, you have bought another coach?

MISTRESS B. [*lightly*].—La, child, am I to be deprived of my little pleasures just because a handfull of rebels are causing His Majesty trouble for a few months? The French ports are still open to us, thank Heaven, and I *have* a new chariot, a most gorgeous new chariot, gilt without, embellished with roses, *roses*, note, *English* roses!

ANSTICE [*hotly*].—An' you were a man, Mistress Bendall, you would be called a traitor!

MADAME W.—Peace, Anstice! Mistress Bendall, I ask you to remember that this is a house whose undivided heart is with the Colonies, as is its Head. You were my mother's friend, else might our ways part. Oh, the waiting of these dreary days is too hard to allow of losing one neighbor through strife. [*Pause, during which Anstice spins rapidly; Mistress B. fans.*] Let me thank you for sending me Mary, she has been of great assistance to me.

MISTRESS B.—And small loss to me. The minx had her eye fixed on that good looking John West. After he left, she did naught but weep like a yowling kitten. [*Anstice starts.*]

MADAME W. [*aside*].—Ah, Captain West!

MISTRESS B.—Yes, yes, you are welcome to her. At "Wildwood," I should offer you a cup of tea. In these days, when everything is "Revolution," forsooth, no one cares if a gentlewoman perishes of thirst on his very door-step!

MADAME W. [*rising*].—Forgive me for my inhospitality. I can not offer you tea, for that, as you know, we drink not, but wine you shall have and Betty will be charmed to share her caraways with you. [*Exeunt.*]

ANSTICE [*rising from her wheel and walking excitedly up and down*].—Mary Paston, forsooth! How dare she raise her eyes to him? Still, 'twere strange, had she not. A man like that must bring maids to his feet. Fie upon you, Anstice Carr! 'Tis not for the feaster to look with scorn on the beggar by the roadside. And what a feast is set before you! Should you not rather let your cup of blessing overflow on the thirsty ones about you? And yet—*I trust her not*, there all my reasoning ends. [*After a pause.*] I wonder what maids do who know not which of two gallants to choose? [*Dreamily.*] A year ago I should have said there was no one like dear old Dick. Now this new splendor dazzles my eyes so, I scarce see aught else. As though there were any choice between all the world and John!—John—never did I call him that, or plight him my troth, beg an' he would. Where get maids their learning? Many a weary hour have I worked over my criss cross rows of a's and b's, and good Mistress Hall chid me oft while I learned my primer through, from "In Adam's fall we sinned all," to "Zacheus he did climb a tree," yet never was maid taught when to lift her eyes, or to let her lashes

veil what she will not have seen for a while. Where do we learn to say "No," when we mean "Yes"? Poor Mary Paston has not learned her lesson, for surely a sad heart need not be dangled before unfriendly eyes, as who should say, "Sooth, good friends, see this poor little heart of mine, once whole, now riddled, where Cupid's arrows have burned their way. Look you, Lord Lover, and go your way! Ah, no, that never could I do. I would remember that there are true hearts left to bind up broken wings; I would—Dick! [*Turns and sees Captain Everett, who in riding dress, enters, left.*] What a rare suprise! [*Gives him both hands, one of which he kisses.*] Pardon, sir, my curtsy. [*Sweeps a curtsy.*]

EVERETT.—Anything at all, so you but let me rest my weary body on this bench, and my hungry eyes with a sight of you.

ANSTICE.—Art hungry? Poor boy! Zebedee shall bring food. [*Turns from him laughingly, but he puts out a detaining hand.*]

EVERETT.—Nonsense, Anstice, put by your teasing, dear. I have ridden far on enlistment duty, and have come miles out of my way for a sight of you.

ANSTICE.—'Tis sweet to see you again, Dick.

EVERETT.—'Tis a year since I saw you. Such a year! May I never see its like again.

ANSTICE.—It must be over soon.

EVERETT.—No one can tell. We are holding our own, in both senses of the word. 'Tis our Country, made ours by the daring of our first settlers, by our fathers' lives of toil, and please God, no tyrant shall wrest it from us. We shall be free!

ANSTICE.—But the awful cost of it all!

EVERETT.—Cost? In your sheltered life here, you know nothing of what men are paying for their freedom. In the camp at Ticonderoga last winter, over four thousand men were unshod, marching through the snows, with no barracks, no hospitals to shelter them. Is it any wonder they desert? Though, thank God, most of the deserters are foreign born. The Commander knows the stuff to fight with. This new call for enlisted men says, "American born, as far as possible."—Enough of this. Let me enjoy my brief moment of Paradise. These gloomy words of mine have sent the sunshine from your face. Have you wanted me back, Anstice, half as much as I longed for you, I wonder?

ANSTICE.—Yes, yes, of course we have missed you and Miles,

and have followed you through every battle with our prayers. But tell me of General Washington.

EVERETT [*laughing*].—There you go, femininity! "Tell me of General Washington;" 'tis the cry of all the dames. Well then, you know him, the same stately master of Mt. Vernon, grave and courteous as ever, under the most trying circumstances that ever man faced. He is as unyielding as a rock, serenely calm in the hour when defeat seems almost inevitable. His pride in his army of tatterdamalions is as great as though they were the model regiments of the great Frederick himself.

ANSTICE.—The Country glories in his greatness!

EVERETT.—A great man, yes, but there have been other great men, and only one *you!* Tell me of your life here. Are the roses abloom in the garden? Were the ripe straw-berries as red as when we picked them together, last year? [*Leans over back of bench.*]

ANSTICE [*ill at ease*].—The roses are scattered now. I was at "Wildwood" when the berries ripened. [*Rises and walks to left keeping her back to him.*]

EVERETT [*following*].—Anstice, I did not think to ask you now. 'Twere selfish to throw upon you the added burden of my uncertain life; but when the war is over and I come back—if I come back—a free man in a free Country, will you be my wife?

ANSTICE [*sinking into chair by wheel*].—Ah, ask me not!

EVERETT.—As you will, dear, I am content to wait. I have always loved you since the days when we drowned your Bartholomew baby, trickt up with ribbons and knots, in the creek, and you fled to my arms in remorse at your fearsome deed. Some day you will come again, little maid, and I shall keep you then.

ANSTICE [*distressed*].—Count not upon it, I pray you!

EVERETT.—I *shall* count upon it. No love that is true and high is ever lost. But I grieve you; take me to Elizabeth. I have, an' it be not crushed, a most marvelous leaf bag of mulberries, which I gathered on my way, for Mistress Bet to stain her pretty lips. [*Anstice rises and they walk slowly across the stage.*] Then I must to horse.

ANSTICE [*pausing*].—So soon?

EVERETT.—At once. I have another mission which 'twill hurt your tender heart to hear of.

ANSTICE.—Truly, Dick, hearts would needs be of India rubber

to keep in any shape, so often are they smitten. What is it, I pray?

EVERETT.—The running down of a poor devil of a spy. Yes, let your eyes flash. 'Tis a disgraceful calling, perchance, but mayhap he loves his country. At any rate, my men have let him slip through their fingers more times than it is pleasant to think on. A sly fox, and clever at doubling.

ANSTICE [*idly*].—Where is he now, think you?

EVERETT.—At Sparwark, a village some ten miles to the north of us. [*Exeunt, right, talking*].

[*Enter the Peddler, dressed in shabby long coat, covered with dust. An unkempt wig covers his head and a dusty three-cornered hat. He wears colored glasses which he removes. He shows every mark of exhaustion. Sets down his tray of stuffs on large table and sinks into chair.*]

PEDDLER [*drawing sigh of relief*].—Egad, that was a run for it, my boy. The rebels were close upon your heels that time. Well, a man can die but once. *Dulce et propria est mori pro patria!* Dying is not exactly what I intend to do, however. I am safe for the moment. Old Peter has given me a good recommendation. Providence, my boy, has endowed you with an insight into human nature. I staked my all that that Peter was a King's man, and here I am, peddler from top to toe. [*Takes out paper which he reads.*] Hmm—so I am his nephew, am I? I wonder if there is a family resemblance? It is not an easy pathway yet. The disguise is good, as far as that goes. I'll wager a crown Mary herself won't know me. [*Enter, unperceived, right, Betty. Looks about for her book, not seeing Peddler. Seeing him, she approaches, touching his arm.*]

BETTY.—Are you tired, Man?

PEDDLER [*starting*].—By His Majesty's crown, who is this?

BETTY.—I am Betty.

PEDDLER.—Oh, to be sure you are. [*Pause, then thoughtfully.*] Well, Betty, would you like to play a new game, called "Secrets"?

BETTY.—Yes, indeed.

PEDDLER.—Well, then, go softly as a mousie and bring Mary Paston here. Mind you, say naught to anyone else, and you shall have—let me see—you shall have some marchpane and comfits. There, now run! [*Exit Betty, right. Peddler takes up different articles in his tray.*]

PEDDLER.—This may not be as easy as it looks at first glance.

If I am found I shall have to play the peddler, and how can a man who does not know a quilted petticoat from a snuff-box, expect to fight with women on the field of feminine toggery? Curse it all, I would rather face a hundred guns than this box of baubles. [*Looks hopelessly over the contents of box. Holds up tassel such as ladies wear on cloaks.*] Now, what the Dickens is this? A dust broom? No. Ah, I have it; a dangle, for most truly does it dangle! [*Imitating an old man, drawlingly*]. Here, then, ladies, is a most sweet dangler, new come from London; no, that will never do, no London for them. From Paris, then. [*Holds up lace collar.*] And this; friend, I christen thee, "lappet." 'Tis a pretty name, an' faith, why should not I, a new Robinson Crusoe, cast upon this island of feminine stuffs, grasp any saving word?

[*Enter, right, Mary and Betty. Betty points out Peddler; Mary kisses her and sends her away, left. She approaches slowly at first, scrutinizing him in perplexity. Then coming forward hurriedly, she addresses him in an agitated voice.*]

MARY.—Captain West!

PEDDLER [*turning with a frown*].—Hush, not that name! Come here and appear to be looking over my ware while I speak with you. I am Joel, understand, nephew of old Peter, who comes here every fortnight. Peter is ill and sends me (the greater fool I). I wish no one to see me, if I can get away without, for I have little taste for peddling. Only the direst need brings me here. Now, where are the papers?

MARY [*trembling*].—I have them not yet.

PEDDLER.—Have them not? But you promised—you swore to get them! Know you the hiding-place?

MARY—I saw Madame Wadsworth put them in a cabinet in her dressing-room.

PEDDLER.—And the key?

MARY.—I have one which will unlock it. [*Passionately.*] I would have had them by now, but as I was about to enter, I met someone. Know you *whom* I met?

PEDDLER.—Nay, I neither know nor care for aught save the papers.

MARY.—Cruel! [*Tauntingly.*] Well then, it was Mistress Carr, Mistress Anstice Carr whom I met! You start. Aye, [*weighing each word*] Mistress Anstice to whom you made love in the

moonlight at "Wildwood". Perchance you thought simple Mary Paston did not see your double game. 'Twas, "Mary, sweet, when this cruel war is over, we will away to England and you shall be mistress of Weston Hall." Scarce an hour later the same lips whispered 'neath the moon, "Mistress Carr, happy are the beams that are captive in your curls."

PEDDLER [*laughing scornfully*].—Spying, were you?

MARY.—Why should I not follow your noble example? Ah, I know you like a well thumbed missal, John West; Joel, nephew of Peter!

PEDDLER [*with appearance of tenderness*].—And love me, Mary?

MARY [*bitterly, after a moment's silence during which she struggles with herself*].—Aye, to my sorrow, else would I never lend myself to this treachery against the only one who has ever been kind to me!

PEDDLER.—Mary, I shall be kind to you. I pledge you my honor as a British officer, that if I get that packet, you shall be no more a poor dependant on the bounty of others, but a lady of one of the proudest names of England. [*He takes her hand.*] I swear it!

MARY.—I know not which way to turn! If I thought—

PEDDLER [*impatiently*].—Time presses. Have you a plan?

MARY.—If I go speedily, I can make my way to the room while the ladies are in the garden pavilion. 'Tis but a matter of a moment. Be ready to leave the instant I return. [*Goes toward right.*]

PEDDLER.—Here?

MARY.—No; await me in the pleached walk. [*Exit.*]

PEDDLER [*gathering up things*].—Now, *where* is the "pleached walk." north, south, east or west? Ah, "west," a happy omen, perchance, let us try. [*Exit left.*]

[*Enter Betty, right, looks around.*]

BETTY.—Master peddler, master peddler, please come back! You promised me some marchpane and comfits; please come back, and give them me. [*Exit left.*]

[*Enter Anstice and Betty, left; Betty in tears.*]

ANSTICE.—So he promised you marchpane and comfits if you would bring Mary to him, and when you brought her he went away? Never mind, dear, we will find him, and you shall have your sweets. [*Exeunt left. Enter right, Mistress B. on Captain Everett's arm. Madame W. follows.*]

EVERETT [*laughing*].—Nay, Mistress Bendall, we war not with women. Drink King George's health, an' it please you, but never look to see England's flag float over this green land again.

MADAME W. [*who has taken her knitting from her bag*].—Not while there is one brave man left to defend it, eh, Dick?

EVERETT.—Should the men fail, I think our women would take up the fight and train the soft hands of infancy to handle the musket.

MISTRESS B.—Richard Everett, many a time have I shaken you when you were a lad, for picking my peaches, and faith, I would I could do it now!

EVERETT.—At your service, madame, shall I present my coat collar?

MISTRESS B.—Foolish boy! You will make a brave husband for some maid.

EVERETT.—I hope so, madame.

MISTRESS B.—When I was a lass, and not so long ago, either, Master Jackanapes, you would have been thought a sorry enough lover, for all your brave uniform. What beauteous coats the Macaronies wore! Bless my soul, it needs it, the young lord of Greymore was crazy daft over me, poor fool! Each night he would follow my aunt's coach home from the routs, and each night he wore another wig. Had it not been for his crossed eyes of a plum green, and his poor little thin legs, never would I have known him. One night it would be "Picquet" at My Lady Bath's, in a flowing red wig; the next a ball at her Grace of Blandish's in a curled golden one. Different hair, but always the same simpleton!

EVERETT [*rising*].—We try to disguise ourselves, but no one is deceived by it, I note. Farewell, ladies, I must see that my horse is ordered before I sup with you. I will attend you later. [*Bows to ladies, who curtsy. He goes out, left, meeting Mary, who curtsies. At the entrance, he meets the ladies Lisle; he bows, they curtsy. Everett speaks to them a minute, then exit. The ladies, followed by their page, Pompey, who carries before him a box wrapped in silver paper, advance slowly. Mary reaches Madame W., curtsies.*]

MARY.—Major Lisle's chariot has driven up with three young misses.

MADAME W.—And here they come! [*Goes forward to greet them.*]

MISTRESS B. [*scanning them through her glasses*].—These be

ladies of distinction, my dear, though their father *is* in this foolish little war. What charming gowns. [*The Misses Lisle, standing in a line, curtsy at the same moment, as if by clock work.*]

MADAME W.—This is a great pleasure. You must stay and dine with us. Mary, [*to M. who under cover of the meeting is about to slip away*] take Mistress Anne's whisk*; Mistress Lois, lay aside your cardinal†, I beg. When did you return from your aunt's?

THE MISSES L. [*in chorus*].—Last week.

LOIS.—Mama sends her compliments.

POLLY.—Grandmama sends her greetings and hopes that you are well.

ANNE.—Grand-aunt presents her most distinguished courtesies.

MADAME W.—Most sweet, I assure you. [*The young ladies seat themselves on the three chairs to the left of the bench, Madame W. and Mistress B. are in those to the right. Their positions are identical, hands in laps.*]

MISTRESS B. [*aside to Madame W*].—That is what I call good manners. [*Aloud.*] And how is your sister Sarah's infant?

THE MISSES L.—Better, thank you kindly.

MADAME W.—What compound have you given him?

LOIS.—Daffy's Elixer.

ANNE.—Snail water, too, sister.

POLLY.—Grand-aunt advises snake root and saffron, steeped in rum and water.

MISTRESS B.—Stuff and nonsense! The only thing to give an infant addicted to fits is Venice Treacle. The Countess of Duxbury always used it.

POLLY [*timidly*].—Oh, I thought her children all died.

MISTRESS B.—Of course they all died. You never heard of a child that lived forever, did you? [*All shake their heads.*]

MADAME W.—What is Venice Treacle?

MISTRESS B.—Venice Treacle is a most aristocratic remedy, invented by Nero's physician!

ANNE.—Wasn't Nero a very bad man?

MISTRESS B.—Nero was a king, my dear, and that is enough for you to know. Well, Venice Treacle is made of vipers, twelve of 'em, put into white wine alone, some opium, licorice, red roses, top of germander, spices from the Indies, and honey, triple the weight

* A loose wrap having no hood. † A long hooded cape.

of the spices. A most excellent remedy, and [*turning to Madame W.*] if Betty Wadsworth had been brought up on Venice Treacle, she would have been another child!

MADAME W.—But Betty never had fits.

MISTRESS B.—That does not prove that she is never *going* to have them. [*Enter Anstice and Betty; all rise and curtsy; Betty runs to her mother.*]

ANSTICE.—I am charmed to see you. Betty and I have been searching for a peddler.

MADAME W.—Old Peter?

ANSTICE.—Oh, no; Old Peter would never have run away. Zebedee said the fellow told him he was Peter's nephew, on the rounds while Peter was ill.

MARY [*eagerly*].—Did—did you find him?

ANSTICE.—No, we sent Zebedee to fetch him. When he comes we will buy all the sweets and gewgaws we want.

LOIS.—Oh, Anstice, we brought over a mademoiselle, just from Paris to show you the fashions.

POLLY.—Bring the box to me, Pompey.

ANNE.—No; I am the eldest.

LOIS.—Mistress Dunstan sent the mademoiselle to *me*, Anne! [*Takes the box from Pompey, opens it, disclosing a mannikin dressed in the fashion of the day, powdered hair, patches, etc.*]

MISTRESS B.—How refreshing to see Fashion once more. Mary, child, [*to M. who tries to slip away*] come and feast your simple eyes on this sight. 'Tis newly arrived from that heaven of heavens, Paris! [*Mary is forced to join the group. She takes doll in her hands, looks at it and gives it to Betty. As she passes near large table, she drops from her side a pocket which has been hanging there. She does not perceive her loss, but looks around from time to time, nervously, as though in search of someone.*]

MADAME W. [*examining mannikin*].—Whence did it come?

POLLY.—Lady Lenox sent it to her daughter in Philadelphia; she gave it to her sister-in-law's aunt, who delivered it to her aunt, thence to Mistress Dunstan, who is in most sweet love with her brother, and *she* sent it to Lois.

ANNE.—Pray look at the style of her breast-knot. [*Ladies examine doll.*]

ANSTICE.—Are they still wearing penaches* so large?

ANNE.—Her hair is done on dressing irons. [*to Anstice.*] Oh, my sweet, you really should wear your hair like the distinguished Mistress Chew wore hers at our aunt's coffee drinking in Philadelphia. Powdered, curled in small curls, and piled up very high in front, to resemble a sugar loaf, but flat behind, and neat.

LOIS.—And most adorable, embellished with ripe currants.

POLLY.—And Anstice, such a gown as the beautiful Mistress Leland wore at Lord Howe's last ball. Of course, we did not go; papa would have been so vexed.

MISTRESS B. [*sniffing in disdain*].—We are advancing, Miss, when bread-and-butter-babies condescend to his Lordship!

MADAME W.—Tell us of the dress, pray.

POLLY.—It was of white satin, with the bottom of the petticoat embroidered in little brown hills, covered with all sorts of weeds. Every breadth had an old stump of a tree, that ran to the waist, worked in brown chenille, with flowers climbing over it.† Oh, it was most genteel!

MISTRESS B.—Perhaps; but nothing to the leopard satin I once wore to His Majesty's ball at St. James.

LOIS.—Things are so dear now. I paid two guineas for a pair of gloves.

ANNE.—And I three for a yard of gauze for a head dress.

MADAME W.—We are trying to wear our old chinz gown now. Surely it ill behooves patriotic ladies to squander crowns on finery.

MISTRESS B.—Especially when their husbands are fighting against one, eh, Elizabeth? [*Betty, wandering to one side, picks up the pocket which Mary has dropped; takes it to Anstice, who is seated in chair nearest spinning-wheel; the ladies are engaged in conversation and see nothing of the following.*]

BETTY.—See, Auntie, Lucy Locket lost her pocket.
Betty Wadsworth found it.

[*Anstice takes it idly; a sealed packet drops out; Betty joins her mother.*]

ANSTICE [*to herself*].—'Tis Mary Paston's, I saw it but now at her side [*as packet falls out*]. Ah, a packet! [*slowly*] a sealed packet! I wonder—why 'tis surely the one of which Elizabeth

* Bunches of feathers used as a head-dress.
† From a description of a dress in Mrs. Dulaney's letters.

spoke! [*She slips it into her own pocket; the ladies are chatting, Mary appearing uneasy; several times she tries to slip away, but is detained by Mistress Bendall to hold yarn, etc.*]

ANNE.—Oh, here comes the peddler! [*All hurry back to meet him, except Mary and Anstice.*]

BETTY.—I want my sweets!

MISTRESS B.—I am needing some orange butter. [*Peddler comes forward reluctantly, as though seeking some way of escape; Mary starts to her feet, feels wildly for her pocket.*]

ANSTICE [*behind her*].—What is it, Mary?

MARY [*faintly*].—Nothing; I am ill.

ANSTICE [*holding out bag*].—Sought you this? [*Mary takes it eagerly, feels it in consternation; Anstice looks at her scornfully, and joins the group around peddler, keeping in background.*]

ANSTICE [*to herself*].—'Tis without doubt the spy Richard spoke of. Master Spy, there shall be two of us! No longer shall you send dear old Dick on wild goose chases. [*During the conversation which follows, Anstice keeps her eye on Mary and the peddler; Mary tries to slip away.*]

ANSTICE [*coldly*].—Mary, I thought I heard you say somewhat of lacking a veil. Here be some of a decorous pattern. [*Mary joins group.*]

BETTY.—Hath he shoepacks for my baby, mother?

PEDDLER.—Here, mistress, sixpence the pair. [*Hands out doll's moccasins; Betty pays him.*]

MISTRESS B.—Hast aught of a callot?

PEDDLER.—Of fine quality, madame. [*Fumbles among ware on large table, and shakes out a lawn apron.*]

MISTRESS B.—A callot! that a callot? By the blue sky above us, my dears, the man knows not a callot from a grasshopper! Peter must be in his second childhood to send you with his wares!

ANNE [*daintily looking over wares holds up a cap*].—Here, Mistress Bendall, is a goodly callot, with all sorts curli murlis.

MISTRESS B.—So it is; how much ask you for it?

PEDDLER.—Half a crown.

MISTRESS B.—Half a crown? [*To Anstice.*] The man is either no peddler or a fool. The thing would fetch double the price in any shop.

LOIS.—Hast any none-a-prettys, Master Peddler?

PEDDLER [*puzzled*].—Ah—h, what style wish you, mistress?

LOIS.—Anything, so it is sweet.

[*Peddler relieved, brings out a package of candies.*] Here, mistress.

POLLY.—What a stupid blunderer, forsooth! 'Tis tapes my sister wishes.

MADAME W.—Hast a suitable pomander?

PEDDLER [*mopping his brow*].—Look and see, madame, look and see!

ANSTICE [*stepping to his side*].—Hast aught of *honor* left, Master Peddler, or hast bartered the last crumb for sixpence?

PEDDLER [*startled*].—Anstice!

ANSTICE.—You! [*recoils in horror.*]

BETTY [*To Anstice*].—See, auntie, how the shoe-packs fit Belinda.

ANSTICE [*looking at doll with unseeing eyes.*]—Yes, dear. [*Betty runs away. The ladies, showing their purchases, walk toward entrance at left.*]

MADAME W.—Anstice, we are going to sup in the garden, Dick awaits us there.

ANSTICE [*absently*].—Ah, yes, Dick.

LOIS.—Aren't you coming, Anstice?

POLLY.—Captain Everett would scarce care what he ate, were you not there.

ANSTICE.—I shall be there.

ANNE.—An' you tarry too long, we shall send him to fetch you.

ANSTICE.—I shall come. [*Ladies walk off to the garden, laughing and chatting. Mary, on her way out makes a detour to reach the Peddler. Anstice stops her.*]

ANSTICE.—Mary, leave at once! Hasten to take the bread from the generous hand that has befriended you.

MARY.—Hear me but a moment!

ANSTICE.—Not a word! But for the Eternal Goodness that watches over us, you would have caused untold misery to my sister, and who knows what disaster to my country.

MARY.—Where *can* I go, Anstice?

ANSTICE.—Go how, or where you will, I care not, but go! I doubt if your chivalrous partner in this creditable affair afford you much assistance. [*Mary looks appealingly at Peddler.*]

PEDDLER.—She has my word, madame. [*Exit Mary, right. Anstice turns haughtily to Peddler.*]

ANSTICE.—And so, Captain West, this is a British gentleman's idea of honor, to steal into the house of an unprotected lady and bribe her household to betray her?

PEDDLER.—I did not bribe the girl; she did it willingly.

ANSTICE.—A bribe is a bribe, whether it be of pounds or kisses!

PEDDLER.—A man's country is more than any woman!

ANSTICE.—Aye, and a woman's country more than any man! [*Thoughtfully.*] Shall I give you up, I wonder! My cousin, Captain Everett, has been seeking you for some time. I could tell him a pretty story of your intrigue and the packet that was so nearly in your possession. Mark me, had you succeeded in your scheme, had you for one moment had those papers in your hands, no fears for your fate, *nothing* could have prevented me from giving you over to your just deserts. You are but a poor conspirator, after all. When next you seek a tool, take a lady's advice, sir, and choose one that can play the game, and not a pale-spirited creature!

PEDDLER.—Anstice, you are beside yourself! Have you forgotten those nights at Wildwood, when the whole quivering heaven was alight with stars, when each pale night moth, fluttering among the roses, was a spirit messenger of love?

ANSTICE.—Aye, a ghost of dead loves!

PEDDLER.—In the silence of that perfumed twilight we walked so close that your hair brushed my cheek. Anstice, you loved me then.

ANSTICE.—Never, neither then nor any time! You were playing your game valiantly, Captain West. Are these the English rules? Our American gentlemen play it more to my liking.

PEDDLER [*tauntingly*].—Your cousin, Captain Everett, perchance?

ANSTICE.—Since you will have it so, yes!

PEDDLER.—Nevertheless, you *did* love me. You do me an injustice.

ANSTICE.—Is that possible?

PEDDLER.—I am a British officer. My country is as dear to me as is theirs to any of your hair-brained gentlemen who measure swords with us. For a breathing space I forgot all save you!

ANSTICE.—And Mistress Mary Paston.

PEDDLER.—Can a man help it if a maid—

ANSTICE [*sternly interrupting*].—I will not hear you! Listen

to me. You shall leave this place in safety. Go to the kitchens and await me there. I will get an order from Captain Everett, insuring the way to the nearest British headquarters, for a *peddler!* [*He tries to take her hand, she draws it away. He turns to go.*] Stop. Understand me clearly. I give you your freedom, not because I am a woman and shrink from the thought of your punishment; nor because one night of my life was glad since you were there, but because you have opened my eyes and taught me to see aright, and recognize a *man!* [*Captain Everett's voice is heard, left, calling.*]

EVERETT.—Anstice, O Anstice!

ANSTICE.—Go! [*Peddler packs up his things in silence, Anstice watching him. She points to right entrance. He turns toward her.*]

PEDDLER.—Anstice!

ANSTICE.—Go! [*Exit Peddler.*] Yes, Dick, I am coming, straight to your arms, dear, the same sorrow-stricken little maid as of old. I am coming to you for comfort, and I shall find it.

EVERETT [*entering, left*].—Anstice!

ANSTICE.—Yes, Dick, I am coming to you. [*She meets him in center of stage, placing her hands in his that are held out to meet them.*]

CURTAIN.

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